



Securing Sex: Morality and Repression in the Making of Cold War Brazil

Benjamin A. Cowan

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In this history of right-wing politics in Brazil during the Cold War, Benjamin Cowan puts the spotlight on the Cold Warriors themselves. Drawing on little-tapped archival records, he shows that by midcentury, conservatives--individuals and organizations, civilian as well as military--were firmly situated in a transnational network of right-wing cultural activists. They subsequently joined the powerful hardline constituency supporting Brazil's brutal military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985. There, they lent their weight to a dictatorship that, Cowan argues, operationalized a moral panic that conflated communist subversion with manifestations of modernity, coalescing around the crucial nodes of gender and sexuality, particularly in relation to youth, women, and the mass media.

The confluence of an empowered right and a security establishment suffused with rightist moralism created strongholds of anticommunism that spanned government agencies, spurred repression, and generated attempts to control and even change quotidian behavior. Tracking how limits to Cold War authoritarianism finally emerged, Cowan concludes that the record of autocracy and repression in Brazil is part of a larger story of reaction against perceived threats to traditional views of family, gender, moral standards, and sexuality--a story that continues in today's culture wars.

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